

Collectors' hopes sink in a flood of Bicentennial coins

By Roger Boye 180

SEVERAL MORE readers have sent in questions:

Q — Is it wise and would it pay for me to save the 1776-1976 Bicentennial coins I get in change? I have several Bicentennial quarters. — A.G., Chicago Heights.

A — No. The government made more than 1.6 billion Bicentennial quarters, a half-billion halves, and about 220 million dollar coins. That's enough to meet collector demand for decades. By way of comparison, 580 million quarters were minted in 1973.

Q — I have seen advertisements for a 1943 copper penny that is different than most 1943 pennies, and a \$10,000 reward will be paid for one. Is this true, and if so, what is the difference in the penny? — E.T., Mentor-on-the-Lake, Ohio.

A — In 1943, a war year, the government did not intend to make Lincoln cents out of the usual copper alloy, but switched to a steel coin coated with zinc. However, a few 1943 copper cents have turned up over the years and have been authenticated as being genuine, according to several coin references, including the Red Book, by R.S. Yeoman.

The very few 1943 copper cents produced at the United States Mint are quite valuable today, as the \$10,000 price indicates. However, there are also some fake 1943 copper cents around; so an expert examination is needed.

On the other hand, it is easy to tell the difference between the copper and steel cents. The very rare 1943 copper

cent looks just like our cents of today in color; the rather common zinc-coated-steel 1943 cent has a much lighter color, somewhat like the dime in color.

Q — I have some nickels that are thinner on one edge than they are on the opposite edge. Are they worth saving as an error? — F.B., Rockford.

A — Slight variations in the thickness of a nickel are caused by imperfections in the minting process. However, the error is rather common; and unless there is a marked difference in the thickness of one side compared with the other, the coin isn't much of a collector's item.

Q — I'm a new coin collector who recently saw an ad for the 1977 Canadian \$100 gold proof coin from the Royal Canadian Mint. It costs \$140. Do you think the value of the coin will ever reach the selling price? — E.K., Justice.

A — This coin, which is being made to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the accession to the throne of Queen Elizabeth II, contains a half-ounce of gold, worth about \$80 at the present level for gold. Obviously, it is impossible to know what will happen to the price of gold. Some persons are predicting a \$250-an-ounce price in two years; others say the price may have peaked already.

It is equally difficult to predict whether this coin might become a favorite with collectors. The Canadian government says it will make a maximum of 300,000 of the coins, and it expects to sell about 100,000 of those in the United States.